

Final Report of the Mission of DERC Carolyn McAskie to the DRC (28 October 2002)

Introduction

1. The mission was led by DERC Carolyn McAskie, who was supported by Stephen O'Malley (HEB) and Jahal de Meritens (RCB). Michel Kassa (Head of Office, OCHA DRC) and Noel Tsekouras (EHI Officer, OCHA DRC) accompanied the entire mission. Herbert M'Cleod (RC/HC) accompanied the mission in Kinshasa, Kisangani and Beni.
2. The mission visited Kinshasa on (10-13 October), Kisangani (13-15 October), Beni (14 October) and Goma (15-16 October) and met with Government, relevant local authorities, including RCD-Goma and RCD-K/ML, UN agencies, MONUC, NGOs and donors.
3. The Terms of Reference for the mission are attached as Annex A.

Main Findings and Recommendations

4. The humanitarian crisis in the DRC, particularly in the east, is huge. Some estimates indicate that more than two million people have died during the last four years. More than two million people have been displaced, and access to many of them is either seriously restricted or impossible. The civilian population has borne the brunt of the conflict, and has suffered enormously. The humanitarian community works in a dangerous and volatile environment, often characterized by harassment, denial of access and evacuations.
5. The situation in eastern DRC has become increasingly complex and fragmented since the departure of the Rwandan and Ugandan troops. In many parts of Maniema, North and South Kivu, RCD - Goma troops have been replaced by Mayi Mayi fighters, with whom the humanitarian community has had little contact. The ongoing conflicts between the Mayi Mayi and the RCD-Goma have resulted in reductions in humanitarian access in many areas, and there is a risk that the already fragile humanitarian situation will deteriorate even further if this is not addressed. It is imperative that the humanitarian community acts quickly to develop contacts with the Mayi Mayi leaders, and engages with them in a principled manner, while preserving clear and transparent working relations with the RCD-Goma.
6. In Ituri, the situation continues to worsen. The Hema and Lendu ethnic groups (fuelled by their respective allies) are locked in a cycle of violence and retribution. Humanitarian access has been severely restricted in the area around Bunia, and displacement as a result of violence continues to increase. Every necessary political action must be taken to arrest the cycle of violence before a new wave of massacres occurs. The situation goes to the heart of OCHA's advocacy role, and OCHA must help to galvanize the international

community to address the problem and ensure that there is full understanding of the complexity of the situation and the need for action.

7. The new situation requires an intensified response from the humanitarian community. Humanitarian actions must increase to meet the new challenges. This will require UN agencies and NGOs to increase staff and programmes, and donors to be generous and quick in response to funding requests.
8. Following consultations with donors and agencies, the restructuring of humanitarian coordination in the DRC is ongoing. OCHA has taken over the role of Provincial Coordinator in North Kivu, and will do the same in South Kivu and Orientale as soon as newly recruited international staff arrive. However, the rapidly increasing needs in eastern DRC require OCHA to take every possible step to expedite the recruitment and deployment of new staff and to procure the equipment necessary for them to do their job. There is also a need to take immediate measures to reinforce our under-staffed OCHA DRC team while recruitment is ongoing. Surge capacity mechanisms should be activated towards this end. The need for an Information Officer in Kinshasa is critical, as is the need for an experienced Humanitarian Affairs Officer to support efforts in the field.
9. There is also a need to take a more strategic approach to addressing the rapidly changing situation. UN agencies, NGOs and donors need to form a small core group to ensure that this approach is developed and disseminated within the broader humanitarian community, somewhat like a field-based IASC core group linked to a Donor Contact Group. Herbert M'cleod has begun discussions on this approach in Kinshasa, and a similar setup is envisioned in the east.
10. MONUC and the UN agencies have continued to improve their co-operation on the subject of DDRRR and have developed a Joint Operational Plan. DDRRR programmes are integrated into the 2003 CAP. However, the DDRRR operation has barely begun on the ground and problems will inevitably arise. It would be useful to reconstitute the DRC Task Force at Headquarters (chaired by DPKO) to ensure that New York remains closely engaged with this issue.
11. It will be important to keep the regional implications in mind while following the developments in the DRC. The events of the last few weeks have already had consequences in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. Our OCHA offices will need to remain in close touch with one another, including the Regional Support Office (RSO) in Nairobi. The RSO's steering committee will be a useful mechanism for ensuring that the RCs in the region remain abreast of developments within the region, can discuss the possible implications and agree on joint responses if necessary.
12. The recommendations of the mission are as follows:

It is imperative to begin negotiations on access to Mayi Mayi-held areas. This will require careful steps to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of range of interlocutors with whom we have had little contact. At the same time

we will need to maintain a clear and transparent working relationship with the RCD-Goma. Close consultations with MONUC will be maintained during these negotiations.

OCHA should utilize its advocacy mandate to bring systematic international attention to the humanitarian situation in Ituri to ensure that the cycle of violence is arrested.

Donors, UN agencies and NGO need to work together to define strategies for addressing the evolving situation in the east, and to mobilize the financial and human resources necessary to meet expanding needs. As part of this approach, a core group should be formed in Kinshasa to chart strategies and develop priorities.

To ensure it can fully play its coordination role, the OCHA team should be strengthened immediately through the use of surge capacity mechanisms. At the same time, we must expedite the recruitment and deployment of staff for our newly-created positions.

Given the increasing linkages between MONUC and UN agencies on the DDRRR issue, it would be useful to reconstitute the DRC Task Force at Headquarters (chaired by DPKO) to ensure that New York remains closely engaged with developments.

Negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding between OCHA and MONUC should be concluded as soon as possible.

OCHA and the humanitarian community as a whole should continue to expand its use of Radio Okapi.

OCHA needs to determine how to proceed with its support to the Goma Volcano Observatory to ensure that the progress of the last eight months is not lost.

The New Situation in Eastern DRC¹

13. The mission occurred at a crucial moment in the evolution of the conflict in the DRC. Several important towns and significant amounts of territory in eastern DRC changed hands and some possible new alliances began to emerge. These changes occurred in the context of a major humanitarian emergency, and present both opportunities and challenges to the humanitarian community in the DRC. The situation remains extremely fluid and subject to further developments.
14. For the last four years, the key factor in the military/political situation in eastern DRC has been the presence of the Rwandan and Ugandan troops. Each force supported various rebel groups, although alliances have often shifted. Rwanda supported the RCD-Goma who until recently controlled the area roughly

¹ The information in this report was current as of 20 October 2002, but have become outdated due to the fluid situation on the ground.

bounded by Goma, Kisangani, Kindu and Kalemie. Uganda has supported several rebel movements during the period, including Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC, which controls Equateur Province and through Roger Lumbala RCD-N, western Orientale Province, Mbusa Nyamwisi's RCD-K/ML, which currently controls the area around Beni and Butembo, and Thomas Lubanga's UPC, which controls the area in and around Bunia town. The military support of their foreign backers was a crucial element in the survival (and multiplication) of the rebel movements.

15. In April 2002, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, which included the Government, the main rebel movements, opposition parties and civil society, reached a partial agreement. The RCD-Goma were the only major rebel group who refused to sign this agreement. However, they have continued their discussions with the Government, supported by the good offices of the SG's Special Envoy, Moustapha Niasse. In July and August 2002, the Government concluded two separate peace agreements with Rwanda (the Pretoria Agreement) and Uganda (the Luanda Agreement), which included provisions for the withdrawal of their troops. While there was initially skepticism as to whether these agreements would ever be implemented, Rwanda began to withdraw their troops in September and Uganda stepped up its withdrawal which had begun several months earlier. Rwanda now claims to have withdrawn all of its troops (some 23,000) while Uganda has withdrawn all but 2,000 troops in Bunia and several hundred troops on the western slopes of the Rwenzori Mountains. The continued Ugandan presence in Bunia is at the request of the Security Council, who had feared a serious security vacuum if they departed precipitously, while the presence in Rwenzori is to counter the ADF rebels fighting against the Government of Uganda.
16. The withdrawals have led to very different outcomes. In the areas controlled by the RCD-Goma, the Rwandan withdrawal has led to major advances by Mayi Mayi traditional fighters who have been battling against the presence of the Rwandans. As a result, the Mayi Mayi now control key towns such as Shabunda, Fizi, and Walikale.² RCD-Goma appears to have pulled back its forces to major towns such as Kisangani, Kindu, and Goma in order to reinforce Bukavu in the face of these Mayi Mayi advances. The RCD-Goma and the Rwandese Government have publicly accused the Government of the DRC of providing military support for these advances.
17. The Mayi Mayi are not a coherent unified force with a centralized command and control structure. They are better thought of as a collection of like-minded groups, with strong links to specific geographic areas and ethnic groups. Historically, the first emergence of the Mayi Mayi groups was during the numerous rebellions in eastern DRC during the mid-1960s, and they have generally acted in opposition to the imposition of external authority, whether from the Government in Kinshasa or external forces. While some Mayi Mayi participated in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (chosen by their respective allies), it has always been difficult to determine who was a "real" representative of these groups. Furthermore, contacts between the Mayi Mayi and

² The Mayi Mayi also controlled the town of Uvira for several days in mid-October, but it was re-occupied by the RCD-Goma on 19 October.

humanitarian organizations have been strongly discouraged by RCD-Goma, although it has been possible to make indirect contacts with some leaders. As a consequence, in many areas the Mayi Mayi remain an unknown quantity for the humanitarian community. It is important to note that most Mayi Mayi groups are currently linked to the Government, while a smaller number have been linked to RCD-Goma and Rwanda, and RCD-K/ML.

18. The Mayi Mayi advances have also led to different actions by the local populations. In areas where the Mayi Mayi are linked to the ethnic groups in a location that they are entering, the population does not flee, or returns quickly if it did move (i.e., Shabunda). Where Mayi Mayi forces represent a different ethnic group or are mixed with the foreign armed groups, the population will flee and not return (i.e., Banyamulenge from Uvira).
19. The Ugandan withdrawal from north-eastern DRC has been ongoing for some months. The consequences of the Ugandan withdrawal have been less prominent than the consequences of their continued presence in Bunia. For the last three years, the area around Bunia (Ituri District) has been characterized by an intensifying spiral of violence between the Hema (supported by the Gegere) and the Lendu (supported by the Ngiti). Although this conflict reflects long-standing inter-ethnic rivalries, it has been largely reignited by cynical political manipulations linked to economic interests. Elements of the Ugandan military have been implicated in these developments, and are alleged to have armed some Hema militias (those now led by Thomas Lubanga of the UPC), and to a much lesser extent some Lendu militias. Both sides have been accused of conducting increasing larger massacres and atrocities against the other. The UPC now control the town of Bunia, where the Hema community has increasingly concentrated itself, and Mahagi and Aru. Lendu militias control the areas around the town, and it is almost impossible to travel between the two areas. The highly politicized and violent environment was tragically illustrated by the deliberate murder of six ICRC staff members in April 2001. At the current moment, there are deep fears within the humanitarian, human rights and donor communities that the conflict could explode into major waves of ethnic cleansing.

The Humanitarian Consequences

20. For OCHA, the task is to analyze these developments in terms of their humanitarian consequences. Although some general conclusions can be drawn, it is also important to understand crucial differences at the provincial and sub-provincial levels.

North Kivu

21. Many regions of North Kivu, most notably Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero and Walikale, have been occupied by ex-FAR/Interhamwe elements since 1994. The area is also home to a number of Mayi Mayi groups. Their presence has resulted in repeated fighting between these actors and the Rwanda Army/RCD-Goma. Since the withdrawal of the Rwandan troops, there has been little change in the situation on the ground, although the amount of fighting is

reported to have diminished, perhaps by the setting up of a well-organized local militia under the control of the Governor. Access to populations in need remains very limited due to insecurity, but humanitarian programmes are continuing.

22. The area around Beni and Butembo is under the control of the RCD-K/ML and remains relatively calm. There are some indications from ex-FAR/Interhamwe groups that they are willing to participate in the DDRRR programme (see DDRRR section). The main humanitarian emergency at present is the situation of approximately 60,000 people who have been recently displaced from the Bunia area. Only two international NGOs, World Vision and CESVI are active in the response, although WFP is currently undertaking an exploratory mission in the area and other organizations are now expressing interest following reports from OCHA. I met with World Vision in Beni and was very impressed by the dedication and professionalism of their staff.

South Kivu

23. Humanitarian access in South Kivu, already very limited, has diminished significantly since the Rwandan withdrawal. International and national organizations have evacuated Shabunda and Uvira in advance of the Mayi Mayi. Threats to Bukavu have reduced movements outside the town. Prospects for improvement in access throughout the province are largely negative. South Kivu is home to a wide range of armed groups, including different Mayi Mayi groups (one of whom had signed an agreement with Rwanda), Burundian rebels, and Banyamulenge forces opposed to the Rwanda and RCD-Goma. Conflicts between these groups in the absence of Rwanda and the RCD-Goma should be expected. On the other hand, one possibly positive piece of news is that the Mayi Mayi leader in Shabunda has sent a message to the international NGOs who had evacuated, asking them to return and promising them a secure environment. An inter-agency mission was able to visit Shabunda on 12 October, followed by a MONUC visit on 16 October. They confirmed that the Mayi Mayi leadership there claims to be open to facilitating humanitarian action. However, it should be noted that this is one of the groups who have been accused of repeated acts of sexual violence against women living in the outskirts of Shabunda.

Maniema

24. Humanitarian access to most parts of Maniema has been seriously limited for months. Only a handful of NGOs operate in this area. The town of Kindu which is held by the RCD-Goma but surrounded by Mayi Mayi, is home to 41,000 displaced people, of whom 11,000 arrived in recent weeks. Access to food in the town is extremely poor as the normal trade in food has been severely restricted by the Mayi Mayi encirclement. The situation is becoming more fragile and violent and there is a concern that the humanitarian situation could deteriorate in the near future.

Katanga

25. The situation in northern Katanga has not changed significantly since the Rwandan withdrawal. Access remains relatively limited to key towns (Kalemie, Nyunzu, Kabalo, Manono, Kongolo), which could be threatened by Mayi Mayi and ex-Far/Interhamwe troops. Further south in Government-held areas, there are concerns that indications of warlordism and fighting between different Mayi Mayi groups could worsen the situation.

Orientale

26. The situation in Ituri is already a humanitarian catastrophe. More than 500,000 people have been displaced during the last three years. In the last two months, at least 60,000 people have moved south towards the area around Beni. The town of Bunia is encircled and the few humanitarian actors there cannot move more than five kilometers outside the town. 18,000 families have been displaced within the town in recent months. There is a limited amount of humanitarian action in the area around Mahagi near the Ugandan border, but access remains precarious. WFP has food for Bunia in Mahagi but it is impossible to transport it to Bunia at this time. If the cycle of violence between the Hema and Lendu communities is not broken, we will likely continue to witness mass killings and further displacement. We were told horrific accounts of the attack, allegedly by Ngiti militias, on the town of Nyakunde in early September that resulted in anywhere from 200 to 1000 deaths. Patients in the hospital were targeted and killed, and there are numerous accounts of atrocities and mutilations, including of children. An Ituri Pacification Committee, chaired by MONUC and involving the Governments of DRC and Uganda, has been formed with the hope of finding a solution to the crisis.
27. In a separate conflict involving the MLC/RCD-N and RCD-K/ML, fighting near Mambasa is resulting in displacement towards Beni.
28. In Kisangani, the RCD-Goma remains in control of the town, but the humanitarian community there is unable to move more than 25 kilometres outside the town.

General Conclusions

29. Five conclusions can be drawn from these detailed accounts. First, there are already signs of a worsening humanitarian situation, and the presence of risk factors that make a further deterioration seem a likely scenario.
30. Second, the events of the last two months have resulted in a multiplication of the number of possible interlocutors on the ground. To work in areas controlled by the Mayi Mayi, the humanitarian community will have to proceed town by town to meet the new “authorities” and to develop a principled framework for engagement with them. New contacts will need to be carefully tested before humanitarian activities can be started (or re-started). The risks inherent in this fragmentation of authority should not be underestimated. In addition, the access strategy will need to be closely coordinated with MONUC, who will be seeking contacts with the same people for their own purposes.

31. Third, it is likely that we will see contradictory trends on the ground. In some areas, contacts with Mayi Mayi will lead to new programmes and new opportunities to work in previously inaccessible areas. In other areas, conflicts between Mayi Mayi groups may develop, leading to warlordism and the attendant risks for the safety of the population and humanitarian personnel, as well as restrictions in humanitarian access.
32. Fourth, the approach of the RCD-Goma towards the desire of humanitarian agencies to work in Mayi Mayi-controlled areas can either facilitate or seriously hamper humanitarian action. During my meeting with RCD-Goma Secretary-General, M. Ruberwa, the RCD-Goma reiterated reservations about contacts with Mayi Mayi groups, based on security factors and a concern about legitimizing these groups. We forcefully rebutted these reservations. If the RCD-Goma continues to object to these contacts, even with those who have offered safe passage to humanitarian actors, access will be even more seriously restricted than at present, and the already grave condition of the population will worsen. The RCD-Goma expressed readiness in principle to set up a framework for discussion of access on a case-by-case basis. It will be essential to actively follow up on this opening. However, if the alleged links between the Government and the Mayi Mayi are confirmed and become strong, the problem of negotiating access with the RCD-Goma should not be underestimated.
33. Fifth, the capacity of humanitarian organizations must increase if we are to cope with the new situation. As SRSNG Ngongi commented to us, “when we get into new areas, it will be worse than expected. We are only seeing the tip of the iceberg.” Some NGOs confirmed that they intend to increase programming, but indicated that finding suitable and willing staff was a major constraint.

Constraints on Humanitarian Action

34. The humanitarian community faces significant constraints in its attempts to meet the needs in the DRC. First, the country is huge and the infrastructure is extremely poor. Roads are often unusable even where they are safe. This translates into a reliance on expensive air operations. While some UN agencies and NGOs have been willing and able to make use of MONUC’s air assets, they are constrained by MONUC’s own requirements and limited flight schedules. ECHO has committed to expanding its free air services, and the NGO Airserv operates four airplanes in eastern DRC on a very reasonable cost recovery basis, but all other travel and transportation requires expensive private providers.
35. A second constraint is the availability of suitable and willing staff. NGO partners indicated that they would like to increase the scale of their operations, but find it difficult to find sufficient numbers of experienced French-speaking staff. UN agencies reportedly face similar problems.
36. A third element is the need to increase the strategic direction of the humanitarian effort. While information-sharing meetings occur in many

locations and at different levels, there is a need to complement these meetings with a more strategic approach. This will allow the community to maximize its collaboration and use of scarce resources. Contingency planning should also be a part of this effort. This can be addressed by establishing strategic humanitarian coordination mechanisms that combines the IASC and the Donor Contact Group. Herbert M'cleod has initiated discussions on this approach in Kinshasa

Restructuring Humanitarian Coordination

37. I had a useful meeting with the donor community as a group, followed by separate meetings with OFDA/USAID and ECHO. I briefed them on our reaction to the multi-donor mission and the actions we have taken to date. There was strong appreciation for our response and our plans to deploy additional staff in the DRC. In this regard, I expressed my appreciation for the fact that their requests for change had been supported by the financial resources necessary for OCHA to implement these changes.
38. The donors also expressed their concerns about the deteriorating situation, and pressed OCHA to both speed up the deployment of newly recruited staff and encourage the UN agencies and the NGOs to increase the scope and scale of their activities in eastern DRC. In response, I challenged them to increase their levels of assistance and noted that the 2002 CAP remained woefully under-funded. There is a pressing need to ensure that future CAPs are based on shared understanding of the situation and a shared commitment to address the needs.
39. The UN Country Team also expressed its acceptance of the recommendations of the Multi-Donor report, and has developed a Plan of Action to implement the recommendations. The transfer of responsibility for provincial coordination has already taken place in North Kivu since 1 September, and will take place in Orientale and South Kivu as soon as OCHA's new international staff are deployed.
40. Within OCHA, the recruitment of additional international staff is ongoing. However, it should be clear from the analysis in this report that every effort should be made to expedite the recruitment and deployment of new staff, as well as the procurement of the vehicles, communications equipment and other materials necessary for them to safely carry out their activities as soon as they arrive. There is also a need for the immediate reinforcement of the existing team, most notably through the deployment of an Information Officer for Kinshasa and a Humanitarian Affairs Officer who can support activities in the east.
41. As a result of the evolving situation, there is a need for an additional position for Beni. We may also wish to re-visit with the donors the idea to eliminate Goma's role of a hub for eastern DRC in light of recent developments. While we may not want to return the office to its former status as the regional office for the east, it is clear that the sub-office has a crucial role to play in the collection and dissemination of information and in the facilitation of

humanitarian action. Many of the organizations operational in eastern DRC use Goma as their base or point of entry into the east.

42. It would not be appropriate to conclude this section without a comment on the performance of our national and international staff. During my mission, I have been deeply impressed by their commitment, energy, engagement, and knowledge of the context. It is clear from the unsolicited comments of UN agencies, donors, NGOs and MONUC that our staff have played crucial roles in furthering humanitarian action, often under extremely arduous and dangerous conditions. While the restructuring will ultimately help them to do more to assist populations in need, it should not be taken as a critique of their efforts to date.

DDRRR

43. The major task in MONUC's mandate is to oversee the voluntary disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and reinstallation of foreign armed groups. The focus on foreign groups makes this unlike any previous DDR exercise. As yet, MONUC does not have a mandate to undertake DDRRR for Congolese groups, but will collect and destroy weapons from any who choose to surrender them. Any DDRRR activities for Congolese groups will be the responsibility of the Government, UN agencies (especially UNDP, which has set up Emergency Fund for Congolese combatants) and the World Bank. The Government will be responsible for disarming and demobilizing Congolese combatants, while the UN agencies and the World Bank will handle the reintegration activities. The distinction between foreign and Congolese combatants may prove problematic as early encounters with foreign groups have revealed that they are likely to contain both foreign and Congolese elements.
44. As it developed its plans for DDRRR, MONUC has called for the assistance of the UN Agencies and NGOs to operate the transit camps for foreign combatants and their dependants. MONUC and the UN agencies have developed a Joint Operations Plan that spells out the respective roles each will play. It is evident that cooperation between MONUC and the UN agencies has improved significantly, although there will undoubtedly be issues to be addressed along the way.
45. MONUC intends to operate a series of mobile transit camps that will quickly process and repatriate foreign combatants and their families. The camps for combatants will be able to process up to 400 people at a time. MONUC intends to make these camps as simple and austere as possible to avoid providing an incentive to combatants to remain in them. MONUC has been approaching UN agencies and NGOs to provide basic services (health, wat/san, food) in the transit facilities. While both NGOs and UN agencies are willing to provide these services, both are concerned about the availability of funding for these activities. Possible partners want to know where the money is coming from. Staff security will also be a significant concern. An associated complication for those interested in participating in these activities in that

MONUC is envisioning a very short processing period, but there are no guarantees that this will be the case.

46. MONUC has made some progress on DDRRR to date. After more than a year of wrangling, over 100 Rwandan ex-combatants and their families began returning to Rwanda from the Kamina camp. These returns were preceded by a weeklong visit by 79 combatants and family members to Rwanda. In MONUC's opinion, these familiarization visits lay the groundwork for returns, and help to counter the control and intimidation that exists within the camps.
47. Nonetheless, many questions about DDRRR remain unanswered. The World Bank has a huge role to play through their \$580 million Multi-Donor Regional Fund, but the speed and flexibility with which their funding can be disbursed is questioned. As well, planning for the services provided to the families of ex-combatants is still incomplete. Finally, the question of DDRRR for Congolese combatants also needs to be addressed.
48. It would thus be useful to re-activate DPKO's Task Force on the DRC in New York. This would allow Secretariat departments and agencies to work together on DDRRR activities and ensure the coherence of field and headquarters approaches.

MONUC – OCHA Relations

49. Through Resolution 1291, MONUC was given the mandate to "facilitate humanitarian assistance." In response, a Humanitarian Affairs Section was created in early 2000. However, the tasks assigned to this Section and its officers were never clarified and the relationship with OCHA has been uncertain. The recent arrival of Nancee Oku Bright as the Chief of Section has resulted in significant improvements in the relationship. MONUC's Humanitarian Affairs Officers now concentrate on providing a liaison between the humanitarian community and MONUC, and particularly on facilitation of logistical assistance. The Section and OCHA now have regular contacts and information sharing has improved enormously. The Section and OCHA have also worked together to ensure complementary staff deployment to maximize the coverage of the DRC. OCHA offices in Kinshasa and Goma have been connected to the MONUC telephone line communications system, and there are plans to connect OCHA offices in Kisangani, Kalemie and Bukavu. Finally, MONUC and OCHA have been discussing a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize the relationship.
50. It should be noted that MONUC continues to have an image problem in many areas, most notably in Kisangani. There is a desire among some in the humanitarian community to maintain a certain distance to ensure that the population does not confuse it with MONUC. OCHA can continue to play a role as a bridge between MONUC and the humanitarian community.
51. One other aspect of MONUC's activities deserves mention. MONUC, in cooperation with Fondation Hironnelle, a private Swiss organization, has established Radio Okapi, the first national radio service in the DRC in a

decade. Radio Okapi is a real success story and has quickly established a huge following throughout the country. OCHA makes regular use of Radio Okapi for disseminating information, as do other humanitarian organizations. It will be useful to continue and strengthen our usage of Radio Okapi, and to continue to encourage the humanitarian community to do likewise.

The Looming HIV/AIDS Crisis

52. I took advantage of my meetings to share information about the impact of the AIDS crisis in Southern Africa. The Minister of Health, UN agencies and NGOs all recognized that we have little information about prevalence rates in the DRC, but that the confluence of poor health service, massive displacement and the presence of foreign troops from countries with high prevalence rates are undoubtedly contributing to an environment ripe for the spread of the virus. It was clear that there is a need to increase both information campaigns and, where possible, provide treatment. MONUC now has an AIDS advisor on the Mission's staff, and MONUC and the UN Country Team need to find a way to work together to face this looming crisis. Radio Okapi can play a very helpful role in this effort.

Goma Volcano Activities

53. I visited the Goma Volcano Observatory, supported by donors through OCHA and Save the Children, where a particularly dedicated group of national scientists are monitoring the volcanic and seismic activities. Their monitoring actions, supported by a rotating group of international experts, have allowed for better preparedness in the face of a possible volcanic and/or seismic event. I was concerned to learn that funding is only assured until March 2003. It will be important to discuss the extension of existing funds and OCHA's management of this project to ensure that the gains of the last eight months will not be lost.

The Role of the World Bank

54. One interesting piece of news we received was that the World Bank intends to expand its activities from Government-controlled areas into the rebel-held zones in the east. It is not clear how this will be done or on what time frame, but it could have useful consequences for economic development and security. The Bank has asked OCHA to help it to establish contacts with relevant actors in the east to facilitate its upcoming mission.

Prospects for the Future

55. The next few months will be crucial for our ability to address the humanitarian situation. Key variables we will need to continue monitoring include:

Our ability to respond to an increase of humanitarian needs

The effects of a wider and more robust MONUC presence on the security of the civilian population

The progress of the DDRRR programme and its ability to draw out the foreign armed groups

Rwanda's reaction if the Mayi Mayi continue to advance in eastern DRC

Additional population movements to Rwanda and Burundi as a result of the developments in eastern DRC

The reliability of Mayi Mayi leaders as interlocutors for the humanitarian community

The longer-term humanitarian and human rights consequences of the change in control of parts of eastern DRC

The possibility of major population movements towards Kinshasa if the country begins to open up

The progress of the Congolese parties towards an all-inclusive peace agreement and the process of forming a transitional government